

The Native American Direct Home Loan Program has been a highly successful veterans effort, particularly in my Hawaii where it applies to veterans living on lands held in trust under this Congress' Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920.

The majority of these Hawaiian home lands are in my 2nd Congressional District, on the islands of Oahu, Kauai, Molokai, Maui, Hawaii, and Lanai.

Since the inception of this program, which was spearheaded by Hawaii Senator Spark Matsunaga, and continued by Senator DANIEL AKAKA, Native Hawaiian veterans have successfully utilized this direct home loan program for their acute housing needs, and, I am proud to say, with nominal delinquency. Over \$20 million has been approved for over 200 loans in Hawaii, with 106 loans, totaling \$7.5 million, pending.

This is an incredible help not only with the needs of many veterans who would likely otherwise be precluded from quality housing, but with Hawaii's overall housing crisis.

Due to its success over the last 13 years, the Native American Direct Home Loan Program, which initially started out as a pilot program, was twice extended by Congress, but is currently set to expire on December 31, 2005.

It is vital to understand why this program is so important to our Native American veterans and why we should make the program permanent, as S. 1235 purposes.

Of course, the most basic reason is the success of the overall program in honoring our commitment to our nation's veterans.

Beyond that, Congress found some years ago that, during the entire history to that date of the program, not a single Native American veteran living on Indian trust lands or Hawaiian home lands had received a VA home loan under the VA's traditional home loan program.

The reason for that was that the unique trust status of native lands did not lend itself to conventional lending practices because banks and other financial institutions did not recognize those lands as valid collateral.

As part of our obligation to all of our Nation's veterans is to ensure that they are all able to tap fully into VA programs, the Native American Direct Home Loan Program addressed this unique and discrete challenge facing many Native American veterans and afforded them the same opportunity of homeownership availed their comrades-in-arms.

This bill recognizes and improves upon the clear success of this effort, and I ask my colleagues to vote in favor of S. 1235.

Mahalo.

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act.

For more than 10 years, Congress has taken unprecedented steps to support our veterans and the families. The American veteran is the model of integrity. They have given this Nation so much and ask for so little in return. They symbolize all that is great about America.

Since 1995, Congress has increased the Department of Veterans Affairs' healthcare budget by 80 percent, drastically increased coverage and benefits, and taken great steps to better the lives of families left behind. This legislation continues to help our veterans, and it is my privilege to cast a vote in favor of our veterans.

Today, Congress takes another step in our on-going effort to better the lives and well

being our Nation's veterans and their families. This legislation will increase the availability and amount of coverage for life insurance, assist in stabilizing low mortgage rates, require educational outreach by the VA to better inform our veterans of services available to them.

As our brave service men and women continue to serve in harm's way, it is important that we always honor their sacrifices and support their families. They return home as veterans and join the ranks of many who have selflessly served our Nation. These brave men and women have given so much so that the American people and our values would remain safe.

As they faithfully upheld their duty to defend our flag and all that it stands for—now we have a duty to stand strong for them.

I urge passage of this legislation.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 1235, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on Senate bill 1235, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

LEWIS AND CLARK COMMEMORATIVE COIN CORRECTION ACT

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5401) to amend section 308 of the Lewis and Clark Expedition Bicentennial Commemorative Coin Act to make certain clarifying and technical amendments.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 5401

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Lewis and Clark Commemorative Coin Correction Act".

SEC. 2. LEWIS AND CLARK COMMEMORATIVE COIN AMENDMENTS.

Section 308 of the Lewis and Clark Expedition Bicentennial Commemorative Coin Act (31 U.S.C. 5112 note) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking "Secretary as follows:" and all that follows

through the end of the subsection and inserting the following: "Secretary for expenditure on activities associated with commemorating the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, as follows:

"(1) NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE LEWIS AND CLARK BICENTENNIAL.— $\frac{1}{2}$ to the National Council of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial.

"(2) MISSOURI HISTORICAL SOCIETY.— $\frac{1}{2}$ to the Missouri Historical Society.";

(2) by redesignating subsection (b) as subsection (c); and

(3) by inserting after subsection (a) the following new subsection:

"(b) TRANSFER OF UNEXPENDED FUNDS.—Any proceeds referred to in subsection (a) that were dispersed by the Secretary and remain unexpended by the National Council of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial or the Missouri Historical Society as of June 30, 2007, shall be transferred to the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation for the purpose of establishing a trust for the stewardship of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Iowa.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on this legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Iowa?

There was no objection.

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5401, the Lewis and Clark Commemorative Coin Correction Act introduced by the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. EMERSON). This is a technical correction which addresses language in legislation that authorized the minting and sale of a commemorative coin recognizing the bicentennial of the great Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery expedition.

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The original legislation was sponsored by a former colleague, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. Bereuter), and the coin was issued in the year 2004.

That bill specified that the surcharge income from the sale of the coins be divided between the National Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Council and the National Park Service to be used for events commemorating the bicentennial. Unfortunately, the Park Service has no capacity to raise the private funding necessary to satisfy the matching funds requirement of statutes guiding the issuance of commemorative coins.

This legislation, which has broad bipartisan support, corrects that problem and will allow disbursement of the funds in ways that support the Lewis and Clark exhibit that has made its